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RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [AJ](#) [AF](#) [AM](#)
SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN: COMUSAFE VISITS KEY AIR BASE

REF: BAKU 923

Classified By: Charge Donald Lu, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Commander, U.S. Air Forces Europe GEN Roger Brady, USAF visited Baku on December 8, meeting with Defense Minister Gen-Col. Safar Abiyev and visiting the nearby Nasosnaya Air Base. The uncharacteristically short meeting with the Defense Minister did not lead to substantive discussion on USG requests to assess Azerbaijani army units and airfields in connection with increased Afghanistan contributions. However, the General put those points to the GOAJ and, by visiting the airbase, signaled continuing U.S. willingness to expand cooperation with Baku. End Summary.

¶2. (C) At his uncharacteristically brief meeting with GEN Brady, Minister Abiyev did not revisit the issue of GOAJ clearance for U.S. assessments of Azerbaijani army units for a potential Train and Equip Program (TEP) for an Afghanistan mission, nor of Azerbaijani airfields for expanded OEF logistics cooperation. Instead, he recited a formula deferring to the Foreign Ministry and launched into his well-worn catalog of complaints about U.S. and NATO inattention to Azerbaijan's needs and U.S. favoritism toward Armenia, and fenced verbally with GEN Brady when the latter defended the U.S. record. The meeting ended amicably, however, and GEN Brady thanked Abiyev for Azerbaijan's contributions to Afghan operations. He also diplomatically reminded Abiyev that defense cooperation with Baku is a complicated enough question on its own for the U.S. interagency, and quibbling over programs such as TEP at the assessment stage prevents them from getting the executive-level attention they need to move forward.

¶3. (C) GEN Brady's six-hour visit concluded with a visit to Nasosnaya Air Base, which is northwest of Sumgait and 25 miles from downtown Baku. (Note: Nasosnaya has been informally proposed several times as a potential Cooperative Security Location (CSL) or supplemental refueling/logistics point. The Foreign Minister most recently resurrected the idea of cost-sharing needed improvements to the base in a November 23 meeting with visiting DASD Dr. Celeste Wallander (Reftel). The United States has already funded Western-standard upgrades to navigational and safety-of-flight infrastructure at the base as part of Azerbaijan's IPAP

process. End Note.)

¶4. (C) Briefers at Nasosnaya showed GEN Brady the USG-supported upgrades to the navigational aids serving the base, including a new localizer and glide path antenna (which provide, respectively, lateral and vertical guidance to pilots approaching in poor visibility) and a VORTAC (VHF Omnidirectional Range TACAN) beacon. The Azerbaijanis briefed GEN Brady that the goal of the current upgrade project is to bring the field, with its 2,500x40 meter runway up to ICAO Category I (Note: Category I is the least demanding of the three ICAO categories for airfields certified for operation under instrument flight rules. End Note.) The field is also served by a Ukrainian-made RSP-10 radar for traffic control.

¶5. (C) The briefer also referred to earlier occasional use of Nasosnaya by C-17 aircraft, and added that a U.S. assessment of the field in 2007 rated it for 500 takeoffs and landings of fully loaded (558,000 lb) C-17s.

¶6. (S) Nasosnaya currently operates MiG-29 fighters and L-39 trainers. At the time of GEN Brady's visit, seven MiG-29s were on the runway, with two armed with six air-to-air missiles each. Nasosnaya also has a decaying former contingent of MiG-25 interceptors, including trainers, which were corralled in an open area near a set of empty reinforced hangars at the northern end of the base. Briefers confirmed to GEN Brady that the MiG-25s are not/not operational.

¶7. (C) Comment. The Foreign Minister's suggestion to DASD

BAKU 00000963 002 OF 002

Wallander on November 23 that the U.S. and Azerbaijan could cost-share on improvements to Nasosnaya as an alternative to U.S. assessment and expanded use of Heydar Aliyev airport in Baku was unexpected, and we do not know the extent to which it was cleared beforehand, if at all. GEN Brady's Air Force interlocutors at the base (including the Air Force commander) were naturally receptive to any thought that their facility could be further improved, however the service has little independent influence on policy. Nonetheless, there may well be potential at Nasosnaya, particularly if Manas' future was again in doubt. Gen Brady's visit was a good signal of the United States' openness to exploring new and significant avenues of cooperation with Baku.

¶8. (U) GEN Brady did not clear this cable.
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